

## Innovator of the Year

2011 Rawlinson Innovator of the Year (deadline June 2, 2011 by 4:30pm)

### Nominee Information

**Name:**

Kerry Hauptert

**Campus/Department:**

Mead ES

**Phone Number:**

210-397-1750

**Description of current job responsibilities and tasks:**

Currently, Kerry Hauptert is a Newcomer ESL Teacher that provides tailored instruction of foundational skills in English and content area to a diverse, multilevel group of students who have had limited or no schooling. Her duties and responsibilities include: (1)Sustaining an emergent/survival skills environment for learning American culture and the US school system, (2)Providing developmentally appropriate instruction that will facilitate the acquisition of English language, literacy, and cognitive academic language and skills, (3)Monitoring student progress, (4)Attending ARD's for ESL/LEP students and serve on LPAC committees throughout the year, (5)Serving as a student advocate for limited English proficient students in meetings with guidance counselors, content teachers, parents and administrators, (6)Collaborating with core content area teachers of English Language Learners to ensure support services for these identified students.

### Nominator Information

**Name:**

Rebecca Barron-Flores

**Title:**

Principal

**Campus/Department:**

Mead ES

**Phone Number:**

210-397-1750

### 1. Describe the innovative idea the nominee developed and successfully implemented.:

The Northside Independent School District (NISD), and in particular Mead Elementary School (ES), has received an overwhelming influx of refugee students in the past three years. Refugees are defined as those unwilling or unable to return to their homelands because of persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion. The resettlement site for refugees falls into the Mead attendance area due to the selected apartment complexes that these families are placed. The number has more than doubled each year, and in response NISD, through innovative leadership by Kerry Hauptert, spearheaded the creation of the Newcomer program and Project Tumaini to address the needs of these students, parents and teachers. Ms. Hauptert championed these families by creating the idea of an inclusive classroom dedicated to serving the unique and immediate need of refugee students. Ms. Hauptert noted that many of the students have never been in a classroom, have never used writing utensils or even knew how to handle a doorknob. Yet, these very same students were expected to pass state standards in just a few short years. Therefore, Ms. Hauptert introduced "survival skills" in the Newcomer classroom to students that hail from Iraq, Iran, Sudan and many other nations. These skills include simple yet crucial tasks such as opening and closing doors, using writing utensils and basic conversational English. She created a scavenger hunt for students that helped them understand navigation around the school as well as their uses such as bathrooms, the cafeteria and common offices. By including parents in this immersion experience, Ms. Hauptert's classroom turned into a haven for the entire community. She expertly orchestrated the following that assisted in increasing confidence and ability among this fragile group in one school year: (1) taught non-English speaking students the English language in order to survive and thrive, (2)developed reading and math skills that led to astonishing increases in test grades, (3) practiced and taught proper cultural and social norms in the classroom (for example, Ms. Hauptert taught the students that they cannot arm themselves with weapons—which was a cultural norm for some students), (4) trained the Mead staff and faculty on cultural sensitivity that helped enlighten the entire campus about the unique needs of these students, (5)became a source of information and advocacy for the refugee families struggling in their newly adopted nation. Ms. Hauptert has applied for and received grants that helped to expand opportunities for the entire NISD refugee population. She wrote and received the NEF Team grant that provided field experience for students and their parents with an enriching literature trip to the Magik Theater. Families, who had previously spent only a limited amount of time with their children, were able to enjoy the literary experience as a family. In the classroom, Ms. Hauptert has applied for and received grants totaling more than \$139,000 to directly assist students and their families. In 2009, she expanded on the Newcomer program by spearheading the creation of Project Tumaini, a Swahili word that means to hope and believe with confidence. The goal of the program is to create a seamless comprehensive family literacy program that will empower refugee parents and students through intense literacy activities throughout the school year. Families "graduate" and celebrate accomplishments together through a ceremony led by Ms. Hauptert at the three school sites. A testament to the resounding success of this program can be seen by the continuation grants this program receives through the First Lady Literacy Foundation. In the Foundation's history, a grant has rarely been funded more than once and had never before been funded three times in a row—Project Tumaini is the first.

### 2. What impact did this have on the department/campus and/or the district?:

In recent years, the district has been faced with a perplexing problem—to educate students who may have never stepped into a classroom and are not familiar with the English language, and have them ready to pass state standards in just a few short years. NISD's refugee student population has doubled each year since 2005, concentrated mainly in the Mead ES area (due to temporary housing at apartment complexes provided by Catholic

Charities). These families are unique in the sense that both parents and students speak limited to no English and must acclimate IMMEDIATELY to school and social norms that are foreign to the entire family unit. Many of these families literally fled from their war-torn homeland and deposited overnight in San Antonio. NISD has a process to test students in order to place them in correct classrooms. The problem NISD encountered was that these particular students did not belong in the traditional ESL classroom. They truly needed a separate class, curriculum and teaching structure. Through Ms. Hauptert's efforts, Mead ES Newcomer program has embraced these students—and in one classroom they learn to survive, adapt and succeed. The Newcomer program has impacted the campus and district in multiple measurable ways. Since its inception in 2008, an average of 47% of students have increased Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS) scores from year to year. These students have exceeded the state target for the appropriate grade levels by increasing at least one proficiency level. More than 82% have increased at least one level on the Language Assessment Scales (LAS) test. In assessing the Informal Reading Inventory (IRI) levels tested at the beginning and end of the year, ALL Mead Newcomer students increased in their levels, with an average gain of least six levels. These are all students who had either limited or NO English speaking or writing capability. The impact of Ms. Hauptert's advocacy can be seen throughout Mead ES, where more than 26 languages are spoken throughout the campus. This provided a challenge for all educators that came in contact with students and parents. By creating a model international classroom, teachers became more aware of the special needs of these students and families. She provides professional development and training for all staff regarding cultural sensitivity and impactful practices teaching refugee children. Through Ms. Hauptert's tireless efforts, the district has received more than \$125,000 in grant funding through the First Lady Literacy Foundation, \$13,500 through the Northside Education Foundation, and \$1,000 from the Dollar General Foundation. The impact is clear as elements of Mead's proven Newcomer model expanded Glenoaks and Colonies North elementary schools own Newcomer classes. Ms. Hauptert's efforts have funded Project Tumaini at both elementary schools and the NISD Adult Education program. The Adult Education department has created refugee adult classes to provide pre-literacy education for the adult refugees. She seamlessly combined these programs into an effective program through Project Tumaini. In addition to campus and district impact, Ms. Hauptert's tireless efforts have positively impacted NISD families and communities. Through her vision and leadership more than 60 refugee adults, 20 children (0-3) and more than 120 students have benefitted from her programs. More than 40 refugee families had the opportunity to learn together at an afterschool reading and workshop. Activities include family story projects, reading circles and academic enrichment trips to museums and theaters that help to enrich curriculum. At the end of the program, families "graduate" together and present projects at the cumulative celebration. Ms. Hauptert's reach goes beyond the classroom and into the students' everyday lives. Students that come to her from differing cultures arrive in the country without simple but crucial items such as proper footwear. Thus, she started an annual shoe drive that donates proper clothing to these poverty-stricken families. Additionally, Ms. Hauptert created and coaches the community's first refugee basketball team. She also started a Girl Scouts chapter for the refugee girls in her classroom. She felt deeply that these students needed an outlet that would help bond children and families in a cultural pastime enjoyed by many countries. Amazingly, these same students and families would consider each other an enemy outside of the United States, but in Ms. Hauptert's team/classroom, there is truly one world, one community. Students, families and the entire community come together to help each other—to help their children find success and overcome tragedy. Tammy Pryce, Mead ES physical education teacher and colleague noted, "Kerry has shown staff members that it is okay to push the boundaries for the best interest of the kids. Because of Kerry's lead we have several staff members who spend their personal time with our students and their families. Many teachers here go out into the community and deliver food to the families and make sure the children are safe and able to participate in activities that they otherwise would not be able to do." Through innovative approaches such as creating Project Tumaini and expanding the Newcomer Program, Ms. Hauptert has positively impacted and transformed Mead elementary school, the Northside Independent School District and the entire community. Above and beyond even this, is the impact and difference she makes EVERYDAY in the lives of her refugee students. On behalf of Mead ES and our surrounding community, I am proud to nominate Kerry Hauptert as NISD's 2011 Innovator of the Year.